

All Age Autism Strategy

2020 – 2025



EasyRead Version



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Foreword



My name is Councillor John Spence.

I am the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care.

I am also Chair of the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board.



My name is Andrew Hensman.

I am the Chair of The National Autistic Society Essex.

I am also the Chair of the All Age Autism Partnership Group.



My name is Jessica Stewart.

I am the Head of Commissioning at Essex County Council.

I also co-Chair the All Age Autism Partnership Group.



Autism affects many people in Essex.



It can cause difficulties at all stages in life:

- At school



- At work



- With healthcare



- In relationships



This strategy is designed to help people of all ages.

The All Age Autism Partnership helped to write this strategy.



The group includes:



- Essex County Council



- Clinical Commissioning Groups



- Community groups



- People who are affected by autism



To help write the strategy the group talked to people with autism and their families and carers.



It sets out our goals and what we will do to achieve them.



It focuses on what people can do and the progress they can make.



This strategy is ambitious but we believe that by continuing to work in partnership we can increase awareness of autism and make Essex an autism-friendly county.

Introduction



Essex County Council is committed to improving the lives of people with autism.



X 8,576

In Essex we think there are:

- 8,576 adults aged 18 – 64 who have autism.



X 2,880

- 2,880 older adults aged 65+ who have autism



We think 34% of children receiving social care services have autism.



We know it is impossible to say exactly how many people have autism.



This is because some people:

- do not need help from support services,



- they have learned ways to overcome difficulties with communication and social interaction,



- they have found jobs that suit their skills.



We know that more people are being diagnosed with autism.

We think that by the year 2035 there will be 12,932 adults with autism in Essex.



Over the last 5 years the number of children diagnosed with autism has increased by 10%.



This is because we know more about and are better at recognising autism.



We want communities to understand autism better so that you feel supported.



To help us achieve this we have written a new **Autism Strategy**.

This is a plan that will help support people with autism living in Essex.



It sets out plans for people of all ages living with autism.

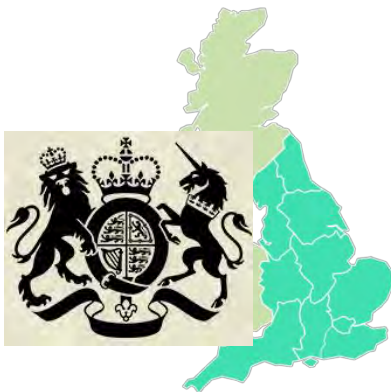


Our plans are for the next 5 years.



To help us write the Autism Strategy we talked to:

- People with autism
- Their families
- Their carers
- Other local groups



And we used the following national guidance and legislation:

- Autism Act 2009
- National Adult Autism Strategy 2014
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice 2014
- Care Act 2014
- NHS Long Term Plan 2019
- NICE Clinical Standards and Guidance



We also used the following local plans:

- Essex SEND Strategy
- Meaningful Lives Programme
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Essex Mental Health Strategy
- Essex Carers Strategy
- Essex County Council: A vision for learning disability and/or autism services
- Essex Children and Young People Plan
- Essex County Council Organisation Strategy
- Essex Hate Crime Prevention Strategy
- Essex Safeguarding Arrangements

What is autism?



Autism, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) all mean the same thing and includes Asperger's syndrome.



People with autism tend to have the same difficulties like:

- communicating with other people,



- loud noises and bright colours can be overwhelming or frightening,



- new or unexpected situations can be frightening.



To get a **diagnosis** of autism, you need to have an assessment.



The assessment will look for things like:

- Difficulties with communication.

This means problems understanding language.



- Difficulties with social interaction.

This means problems understanding other people.



- Repetitive patterns of behaviour and few interests.



For a diagnosis of autism these difficulties need to be constant and affect how you live your life.



People with autism may also have learning disabilities.

Mental illness is also common.



Men are more likely to be diagnosed with autism than women.

We don't know why this is.



Women do not show autistic behaviours as clearly as men.



Autism is known as a “hidden disability”. This means that other people do not recognise that someone has autism.

Some people could mistake someone with autism as having challenging behaviour.



It is better to be diagnosed with autism in early childhood. This can give people better access to services.



A diagnosis of autism can help families and carers understand how they can support loved ones.



Families and carers of people with autism also need support.



Being a carer can affect a person's health and wellbeing.



Brothers and sisters of children with autism can also be affected.

What are funded arrangements?



There is lots of support available for you and your family.



This support can be paid for and provided by:

- Essex County Council
- Health organisations
- Local councils
- Charities and communities group





Some services are **universal services**. This means that anyone can use them.

Universal services include things like:

- Leisure centres
- Information services
- Health services

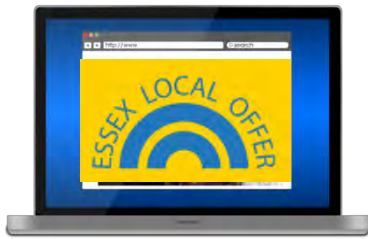


Some services are specialist for people with the highest needs.

If you need these services a professional will refer you.



We want you to know what services are available to you and how you can access them.



You can find lots of information about what is available on our websites:

www.essexlocaloffer.org



www.livingwellessex.org.uk



Our partners in health and voluntary organisations also put information on these websites.

Our vision and aims



We want you to live a full and happy life.



We want people in the community to better understand autism.



We want you to be able to get a diagnosis if you want to.



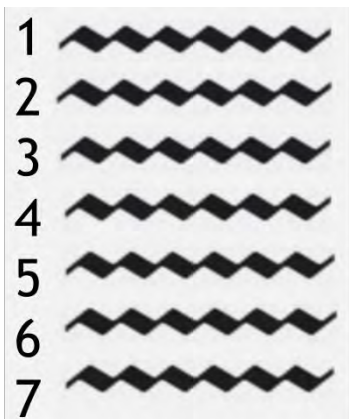
We want you to get the support you need.



We want you to be able to access universal services.



To achieve our vision we will work in partnership with other organisations.



We will follow 7 key principles:



1. Person-centred



This means we will:

- Personalise services and support to meet your individual needs.



- Involve you and your family in decisions about autism services.



- Collect feedback about the services you receive.



2. Whole system approach



This means we will:

- Develop partnerships with health services, social care, the police, Criminal Justice Service, voluntary organisations and people who are affected by autism.



- Agree outcomes with our partners.



- Share relevant information with our partners, in accordance with the law.



3. Early intervention



This means we will:

- Provide relevant information, advice and guidance in accordance with the Care Act.
- Make sure that you can access support and information as soon as you need it.
- Make sure that schools provide support for children with autism and their families.





- Help to manage traditional transition points.

This means when you move from primary to secondary school, or leave school to get a job or go to college.



4. All age approach



This means we will:

- Make sure that your support changes as your needs change throughout your life.



- Make sure that childrens' and adult services work together to support transition as children grow up.



5. Empowerment



This means we will:

- We will help families to be more **resilient**.

Resilient means that you become strong and healthy again after something bad happens.



- Make sure that you feel confident and that your views and wishes are heard.



- Make sure you can have an advocate if you need one.



- Help communities to be more inclusive.



6. Strengths based



This means we will:

- Work with you to find out what you can do now and what you might be able to do in the future.



- Help you to get the support you need to achieve your goals.



- Learn from examples of best practice in other parts of the country.



7. Co-production



This means we will:

- Involve you and your family when we plan and make decisions about autism services.

Outcomes



We asked you what you want to achieve in life.

You told us that you want people to make reasonable adjustments so that you can:



- be happy, loved and support by family and friends,



- be healthy,



- feel safe,



- go to a good school or college that meets your needs,



- do well in education and training,



- get a job,



- enjoy activities in your community,



- achieve your goals,



- live independently in a house that suits your needs,



- be involved in decisions about your care,



- use universal services,



- know where you can get information and support.

Priorities and objectives



You told us that our main priority should be to make Essex autism friendly.

To achieve this we think we need to focus on 7 keys areas.



1. Planning

2. Professional awareness



3. Diagnosis assessment and support



4. Accommodation



5. Employment



6. Education and training



7. Criminal justice



1. Planning – the current situation

You have told us that the support system is confusing.

You don't know what support is available or where to go for support.



Services do not adapt to meet individual needs.



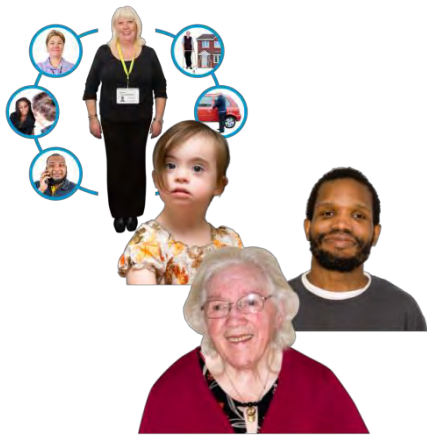
Parents say that it can be difficult to get the right support for their children.

What we want to achieve

If we achieve our goals:

- Services will be accessible and can adapt to meet individual needs.





- A variety of services will be available for people of all ages.



- Information will be easier to understand.



- It will be easier to get support for children.

To achieve our goals we will:



- Make reasonable adjustments to make services easier to access.



- Work in partnership with other organisations and share resources.



- Work with you when designing new services.



- Make sure information and advice is up to date.

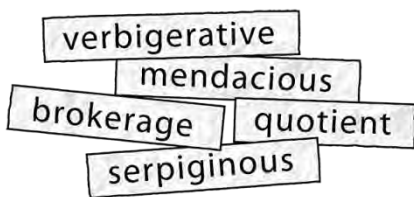


- Make it easier to get support for children.

2. Professional awareness – current situation



- Some staff do not know enough about autism.



- The language used can be confusing.

Organisations use different words to mean the same thing.



- Organisations don't always share information so you often have to repeat yourself.

What we want to achieve



If we achieve our goals:

- Professionals will know more about and will be better at recognising autism.



- There will be better communication between organisations and people with autism.



To achieve our goals we will:

Develop training so that:

- Staff have a better understanding of the autistic spectrum.



- Organisations use the same words.



- Organisations share information.

3. Diagnosis, assessment and support – current situation



You have told us that:

- It can be difficult to get support if you do not have a diagnosis.



- You don't know where to find support in your community.



Parents of children with autism have told us:

- They are confused about what support is available.

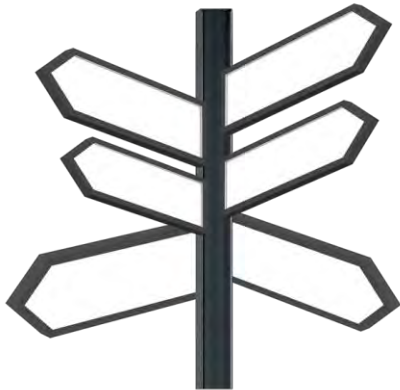


- Professionals focus too much on the symptoms rather than the support that is needed.



- There is not enough focus on planning and progression.

What we want to achieve

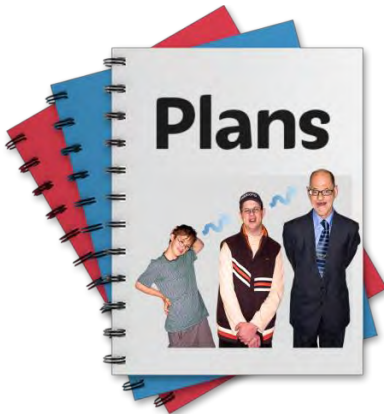


If we achieve our goals:

- You will be signposted to appropriate support as part of the assessment process.



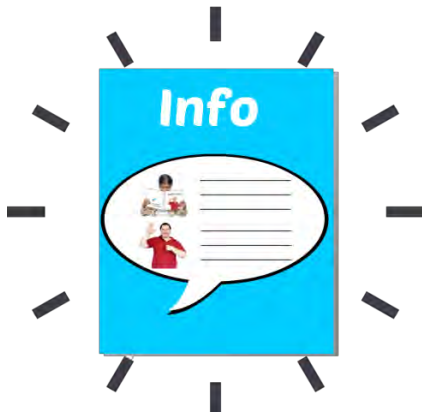
- The assessment process will include other health teams to identify other possible conditions.



- There will be effective planning for progression for the whole life.



- There will be better support for carers.



- Clear information, advice and guidance will be available.



- Waiting times for assessment will be shorter.



To achieve our goals we will:

- Make sure that staff understand the systems and processes.



- Make sure that parents know where they get information and support.



- Signpost you to appropriate support.



4. Accommodation – current situation

You have told us:

- Young people with autism want to live independently,



- but they need support to do this.



- You are worried that support in residential care isn't good enough.



- Parents are worried about who will support their children when they can no longer look after them.

What we want to achieve

If we achieve our goals:



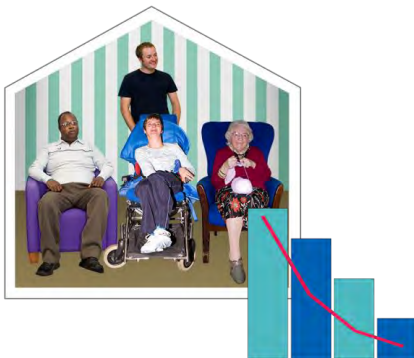
- There will be a range of housing options.



- You will understand your housing options.



- You will have the life skills to live independently.



- There will be less need for residential care.

To achieve our goals we will:



- Make better use of technology.



- Make sure that local councils build the right sort of housing.



- Develop a [Shared Lives](#) scheme.

[Shared Lives](#) is where you live with your carer as part of their family.



5. Employment – current situation

- We know that only a small number of adults with autism work full-time.



- Young people want to work but they are worried that there are not enough jobs,



- and that there isn't enough support to help them get a job.



You think that employers do not want to give a job to someone with autism because:

- they don't understand that people with autism can be good workers.



- They don't know that they can get help to employ someone with autism.



- They have false beliefs about autism.

What we want to achieve

If we achieve our goals:

- more people with autism will have a job.





- Employers will understand autism better.



- Schools and colleges will prepare young people for work.



- Parents will support their children to go to work.



To achieve our goals we will:

- Write an employment strategy.



- Develop an autism pathway into employment.



- Encourage employers to offer work experience.



- Increase the number of apprenticeships in health and social care.



- Buy more support to help you get a job.



6. Education and training – current situation

Parents have told us:

- Education is not good enough for children with autism.



- There is not enough support into High Education.



- Schools do not have the resources to support children with autism.



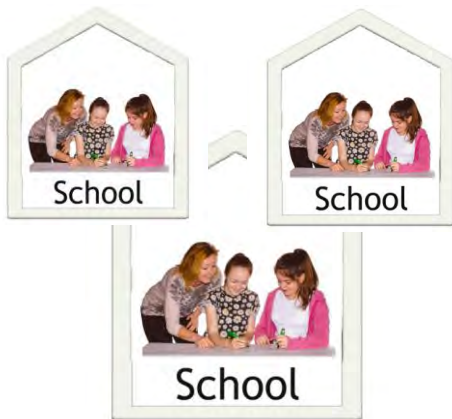
What we want to achieve

If we achieve our goals:

- Education will be inclusive across Essex.



- Teachers will understand autism better.



- There will be a range of schools



7. Criminal Justice – current situation

- Crime against people with autism is now the most common form of hate crime.



- Communication and social difficulties can make people with autism vulnerable to making bad choices.



- Some behaviours of people with autism can be misunderstood to be aggressive.



What we want to achieve

If we achieve our goals:

- The criminal justice system will understand autism better.



- People with autism will be better supported in the criminal justice system.



- Communities will be friendly and safe.



The actions set out in this strategy are written in detail in our Action Plan.



The All Age Autism Partnership will check the progress of this strategy and will tell the Health and Wellbeing Board how we are doing.